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Choosing three topics that interest me in my field of study, seems a simple task, but with endless possibilities it quickly becomes challenging to choose. As Ray Eames once said, 'Everything hangs on something else' (1980), and I believe this applies to all creatives; our interests, experiences, and inspirations are interconnected, shaping our design choices. We pick up on these 'something else', adding them to our list. With this in mind, I have chosen to explore three topics that resonate with my graphic design interests: Book Jackets, Deeper Meanings, and Motion

Book jackets.

Originally, a book jacket served a purely functional purpose: as 'protective packaging' for books. However, as Drew and Sternberger note, these jackets have 'evolved from utilitarian objects into highly visual and conceptualized means of communication' (2005, p. 20). With this evolution, book jackets have become more than just protective covers; they are now powerful marketing tools - '90% of consumers make a purchase after only examining the front of the packaging' (Clement, 2007, p. 919). With this knowledge and in such a vast market, a reader's choice can often depend solely on which book catches their attention or features an intriguing title or illustration.

An experimental study on factors influencing readers found purchasing attributes the reader considers when choosing a book include 'the author's reputation, the book's theme, the writing style, the book's appearance, and its perceived cultural value' (D'Astous et al, 2006, p. 35). As John Berger writes, 'Seeing comes before words' (1972, p. 33). This suggests that we often judge a book before engaging with its content.

If then in many cases, a book's desirability relies heavily on its jacket, this makes the graphic designer's role crucial. One of the most influential and well-known book cover designers, Chip Kidd explains in an entertaining TED Talk that, 'the book designers responsibility is threefold; to the reader, the publisher and most of all to the author' (2012), he goes onto say 'once the book designer has read the text, he has to be an interpreter and a translator'. This reveals the significance of book jacket design; it is not just about aesthetics but about capturing the essence of the book itself. The responsibility a designer holds when creating a jacket for an author is significant, and I believe this thoughtful approach is what makes Kidd one of the best in the field.



Fig 1, (Kidd, 2016, *Buddha*)

In an interview, Kidd further emphasizes this philosophy, stating 'Jacket design is ultimately a piece of art serving a more important piece of art: the writing itself' (Duerden, 2011, p. 49). The key point here is the importance of truly understanding the story and the author's intent to create a meaningful and effective design. Kidd's artwork created for the book series 'Buddha' (fig 1) is an example of just that. He explains 'when

it is on your shelf, you get a shelf life of the Buddha moving from one age to the next' (Kidd, 2012), which I think is a beautiful and powerful concept, providing a clear understanding of the books' contents. These book jackets market themselves effortlessly. Singh explains,

Illustration has various attributes such as attention grabber, presenting complex ideas in simpler ways, having a retention value, evoking emotions, and having the ability to break the monotony created by the overused photograph (2018, quoted in Sharma and Chaturvedi, 2024, p.106).

I think the illustrations create a deeper meaning and a more personable feel. As a collection they present a very appealing display, enhanced by the colours, typeface, and layout. Something that, based on what I've learnt, people desire when choosing books for their shelves.



Fig 2, (Kidd, 2015, *All the beauty you will ever need*)

Kidd talks about 'clarity' and 'mystery' when designing jackets. He explains, 'Clarity gets to the point, it's blunt, honest, it's sincere'. Whereas 'Mystery is a lot more complicated. Mystery demands to be decoded and when it's done right, we really want to' (2015). His

breakdown of this thought process is helpful, by combining both clarity and mystery, he transforms authors' ideas into covers that are not only visually striking but also thought-provoking. I feel there is a real skill to be learnt in balancing being too obvious with being too subtle.

'The Visual Vernacular,' meaning 'making something look like something else' (Kidd, 2015), is the approach Kidd used when designing the book jacket for David Sedaris (fig 2). The title 'All the beauty you will ever need' had no direct connection to the book's content. The element of clarity comes from the note, resembling those found in fortune cookies, something recognizable to most people. However, the mystery lies in the nature of the messages that are written on these notes, which are often unclear and open to interpretation. Similarly to how people apply fortune cookie messages to their own lives, this design choice reinforces the reader to think how the book might resonate with them (Kidd, 2018). The simplicity of this design is attention grabbing and challenging, as explained here 'the rule of simplicity is to reduce details and retain the important characteristics' (Regina and Chun-Cheng, 2007, p. 71). This reinforces how Kidd uses simplicity not to strip away meaning, but to highlight it, this approach engages the audience which inevitably helps to sell the story.

Deeper Meanings.

As a young designer still learning her craft, I've found myself examining logos more closely. These days, I'm drawn to the symbols and messaging that communicate a brand's values or products, rather than simply their aesthetic appeal. I question more the choices behind the shapes, colours, and typography: were they intentional or coincidental?

It seems I'm not alone in this observation. Kohli and Suri suggest that 'people look for meaning in logos' (2002, p. 60), which is interesting, as it implies that the deeper meanings within a logo can help forge stronger emotional connections with a brand. Through designing logos myself, I've come to realise how difficult it is to create something meaningful, simple, and professional all at once. Balancing clarity with depth is more complex than it seems. To explore this idea further, I will focus on the work of Saul Bass. A designer who created logos that tell a story. As explained by Horak, 'A simple design with emotional appeal was the foundation of the Bass brand' (2014, p. 64).



Fig 3, (Bass, 1978, *Girl Scouts*)

The Girl Scouts logo is a strong example of Horak's explanation of Bass's design philosophy. Through minimalist shapes and strategic use of negative space, the design communicates the organisation's values in a way that is both subtle and powerful. Shivani explains that negative space is 'the space within the elements of a composition that pertains the balance and helps make sense of what the composition is trying to portray' (2021, p. 10). In this context, Bass's use of negative space becomes more than a stylistic choice; it becomes a deliberate tool for creating deeper meaning and

reinforcing the brand's message.

As White puts it, 'A design that lacks relationship is just a group of unrelated parts' (2017, p. 14). Bass's design avoids this entirely, every element works in harmony, from the silhouettes to the organic shape of the leaves. This design choice does not seem accidental. This is further supported by White's view that 'Design is actually a service that is supposed to give messages stopping power and make their meaning and value plain' (White, 2017, p. 10). The logo may appear 'simple' at first glance, but it reflects a deep understanding of the organisation's mission and audience. It's this ability to combine visual restraint with deeper meaning that makes Bass's work impactful.



Fig 4, (Bass, 1972, *United Airlines*)

The United Airlines logo first created in 1926, has over the years undergone multiple revisions. In 1972, Saul Bass introduced a new version that became widely known as the 'tulip' (Silver, 2001, p. 27). This design is particularly intriguing due to the multiple layers of meaning it conveys. The shape subtly forms a U for United, while also resembling a tulip, as the nickname suggests. There is also a sense of movement within the logo that hints at the idea of wings, aligning with the airline's identity. The symmetry and joining of the shapes hints to unity.

Kress et al. highlight that 'Colour is used to act on others, it is used by people to present themselves and the values they stand for' (1996, p. 230), which could signify the red,

white and blue in this logo reflects the American flag reinforcing the brands location. Similarly to the Girl Scouts logo, the United Airlines logo has significant depth despite its seemingly simple form. Wang et al. explain how ‘Many books on cartoon sketches teach art novices how to use geometrical shapes to draw objects’ (2007, p. 66). This is a noteworthy point because a humble shape can hold so much meaning. It would seem the key lies in finding the right balance between complexity and simplicity, and understanding how small details can add considerable depth to a design. Furthermore, it is understood that ‘Bass relied heavily on a grid structure to work out the various design elements’ (Horak, 2014, p. 65). Perhaps, alongside his creativity, this method enabled him to achieve the symmetry, consistency, and refinement that, to this day, helps these logos remain impactful and represent their brands so strongly.

Motion.

Motion graphics have become the norm in today’s life, in comparison to historically being associated mainly with cinema and television, they are now used across brand identities, social media platforms, and marketing strategies.

The human bias towards motion has its roots in the essential fight or flight response and is still important nowadays. Simply put, when something moves, the brain is hardwired to notice and perceive it as a potential threat, so we pay close attention to it (Konrath, 2017, cited Bui, 2021, p. 9).

This insight underlines just how impactful motion can be and how brands have learned to take advantage of that instinctive reaction. Shir and Asadollahi observe that ‘Motion graphics first priority is audience attraction, while this matter is the second priority for the field of brochures, posters, and other printed media’ (2014, p. 3). Interestingly, they also point out that ‘70% of the influence of a motion graphic work is made by the sound’

(2014, p. 4). In hindsight, this seems obvious; by appealing to both sight and sound, motion graphics activate more senses, creating a stronger emotional response and curiosity.

With such a strong influence on audiences, it's easy to see why motion graphics are often considered more effective than still images. As Manovich highlights, motion is a 'metamedium', it 'can use all techniques which were previously unique to different media' and combine to create a 'new hybrid visual language' (2006, p. 10). Its ability to engage and inform is undeniable. However, in a world saturated with digital content, it's worth questioning whether constant exposure to motion is leading to overstimulation and perhaps even affecting our ability to imagine or interpret visuals. In the following section, I will explore the advantages and disadvantages of motion graphics.

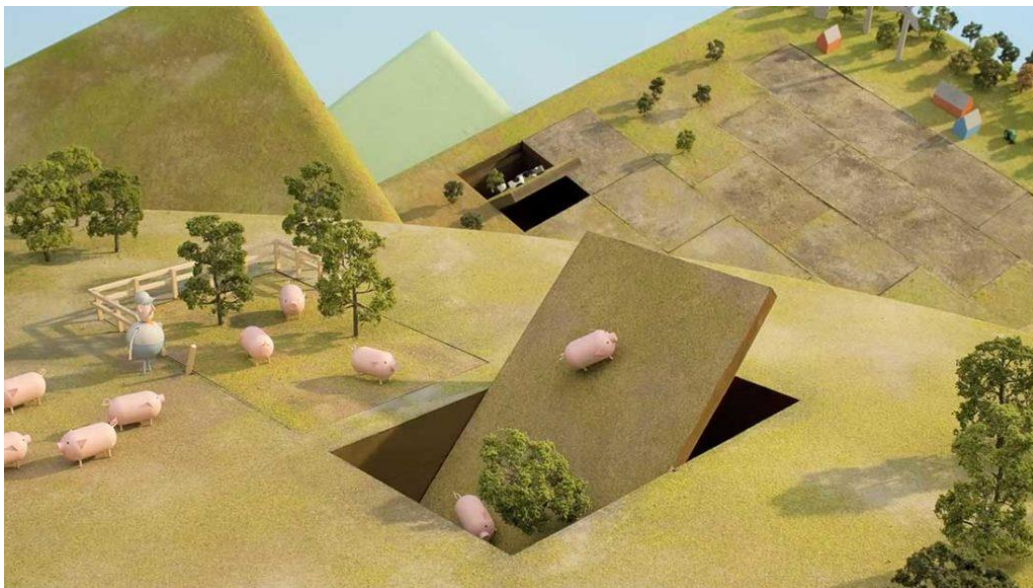


Fig 5, (Kelly, 2011, *Chipotle: Back to the Start*)

One of the key advantages of motion graphics is their ability to enhance storytelling and support learning. As Bui notes, motion allows people to 'visualize subjects for better understanding' (2025). An amazing example is the Chipotle: Back to the Start campaign (fig 5). The powerful message is delivered effortlessly through animation using physical

models. 'An animator who uses physical modelling is like a photographer who captures the world as it actually is' (Manovich, 2011, p. 83). This demonstrates how the use of physical animation makes the advert feel more real and relatable; it resonates on a deeper emotional level while remaining beautiful to watch.

As emphasised here by Shir and Asadollahi 'Motion work conveys more complex concepts and meanings in a simpler format which influences the audiences' minds' (2014, p. 5). In fact,

It represents a biological response called the affective contagion phenomenon. According to this phenomenon, a person will immediately sympathize and feel the feelings of experiences depicted on the screen (Hussain, 2022, p. 647).

As a viewer, you can't help but be drawn into the scene. This is what motion does best, it creates empathy and provokes thought in ways a static poster likely could not.

However, while many campaigns use motion graphics for good, there are also negative aspects especially when it comes to the amount of time people, particularly children, are exposed to screens. Sophie Winkelman speaking at the Alliance for Responsible Citizenship expressed, 'Children aged 8-18 are on average spending 7 and a half hours per day on screens, outside of school hours' (2025). With such high levels of screen exposure, it seems inevitable that this will come with consequences. Motion graphics can likely contribute to this screen use. Recent research shows depression, mental illness, anxiety, self-harm, and suicide have all increased among boys, girls and adults since the late 2000's (Haidt, 2024, p. 1-3). While motion graphics aren't solely to blame, it is a digital tool that creates content to draw attention, often at the cost of imagination and creative engagement. Neurologist Christina Capel explained that 'the brain is like a muscle that needs to stay fit with sustained focus and deep thought' (Alliance for Responsible Citizenship, 2025). With this in mind, it's perhaps no surprise that 'Sweden

has been the first country to kick tech out of the classroom' (Alliance for Responsible Citizenship, 2025). It seems a shame that what could have been a powerful educational tool has instead become a distraction, to the point where Sweden's decision appears both valid and necessary.

Reflecting on the pros and cons has left me with mixed feelings about motion graphics. I believe it is a great storytelling and engaging tool that can send a stronger message to the audience than static graphics. However, I question whether they need to be used at every turn. In educational settings it can add real value depending on the subject and context, but with so much screen exposure outside of school hours, I wonder whether they risk becoming less effective due to overstimulation and overuse.

Overall, I've found my research into all three subjects interesting and inspiring. Each topic offers depth I could easily explore further. It has reinforced just how dynamic and influential graphics can be across all platforms: print, digital, and motion. This leads me to some key question going forward:

With such a vast amount of digital content at our fingertips, does physical printed design still stand a chance in an increasingly motion-driven future?

Is technology a tool for expanding creativity, or a challenge that people will have to consciously navigate?

In a world where anyone can create a brand in minutes, what will be the future of truly original, deeply considered design?

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Figure 2: Kidd, C. (2015) *All The Beauty You Will Ever Need* by David Sedaris. Available at: <https://medium.com/galleys/judge-this-ef99c0164b84> (Accessed: 15 March 2025).

Figure 3: Bass, S. (1978) *Girl Scouts*. Available at: <https://goodlogo.com/extended.info/girl-scouts-logo-3064> (Accessed: 09 April 2025).

Figure 4: Bass, S. (1972) *United Airlines*. Available at: <https://www.logohistories.com/p/saul-bass-united-airlines-logo-history-1970s> (Accessed: 09 April 2025).

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